

PATENT

S/N 09/666,867

a partitioning device. That is, the partitioning device helps avoid the sort of distortions illustrated in Figure 1. Claim 5 recites a similar method for use with a strip of even thickness, and claim 2 recites a device for rolling strip that operates on a similar principle.

More particularly, as recited in claim 1, the partitioning device contacts the strip "so as to absorb transverse stresses in the strip". Claims 2 and 5 recite similar limitations.

An example of how transverse stress absorption can be achieved is provided by the specification, beginning at page 4, line 33. In the exemplary embodiment described therein, the partitioning device includes one or more rollers that maintain a good grip on the strip over a large looping angle. The transverse stresses thus are transmitted to and absorbed by the rollers.

Applicants emphasize that this arrangement is exemplary only. As claimed, the partitioning device is defined functionally, not in terms of particular structure, i.e. the presence of rollers, or a particular number or type of rollers. Regardless of its particular structure, the partitioning device absorbs transverse stresses from within the strip. This specific functional feature is required of the partitioning device in each of claims 1, 2, and 5.

However, Applicants respectfully submit that none of the cited references disclose or even suggest such a feature. None of the references disclose or suggest rollers or other elements that absorb transverse stresses. Indeed, the references do not appear to even show any awareness that such a feature might be advantageous.

The rejection asserts that the rollers in the exemplary embodiment of the claimed are the same as the rollers in the cited references. The rejection also asserts that the cited references may be considered to anticipate the claimed invention even if they are silent as to the functions of the invention, if the references disclose apparently similar structural elements. In particular, the rejection points to the presence of rollers in each reference, and asserts that this implies measurement of stresses and absorption of transverse stresses.

S/N 09/666,867

PATENT

Applicants respectfully disagree.

Applicants note that the pending claims do not recite rollers for absorbing transverse stresses. The disclosure describes an exemplary embodiment of the claimed invention that uses rollers for this purpose, but the invention is not limited to this embodiment.

However, regardless of structure, the partitioning device of the claimed invention is distinguished from the rollers of the cited references at least by its functionality, i.e., it absorbs transverse stresses, while none of the cited references disclose such a feature regarding the rollers therein. Absorption of stresses is a functional limitation of the partitioning device in particular, and the claimed invention in general. Not all rollers or arrangements of rollers absorb transverse stresses; thus, a roller not specified to perform this function cannot be assumed to do so. However, the partitioning device of the claimed invention, whether made with or without rollers, does.

An otherwise undistinguished roller does not inherently absorb transverse stresses in a strip by its mere presence in a device. As described below, at least some of cited references themselves indicate the presence of transverse stresses despite the presence of rollers. Likewise, the mere presence of a roller does not imply that stress is being measured, or that it even could be measured by a particular device.

For this reason, absent some positive disclosure by the references that stresses are measured and transverse stresses are absorbed, Applicants respectfully submit that these functions cannot be assumed from the mere presence of elements alleged to be structurally similar to elements of the claimed invention.

Turning to the individual references, with regard to Foster the rejection notes the use of a dancer roll 24 and idler rolls 26. However, Applicants find no disclosure or suggestion that these or other elements of Foster absorb or even are capable of absorbing transverse stresses.

S/N 09/666,867

PATENT

The rejection references column 3, lines 56-57. As disclosed therein, the device of Foster detects the total tension in the web, and transmits this force to a summing device. This is a different function than that of the claimed invention. Total tension would include both the "base" longitudinal stress, i.e. that applied uniformly across the web to keep it taut, the transverse stress in the web, and the longitudinal stress induced by transverse stresses in the web.

In contrast, in the claimed invention the transverse stress is absorbed, thus likewise eliminating longitudinal stress produced therefrom, and leaving only the base longitudinal tension. With the other stresses absorbed or eliminated, with the claimed invention the base longitudinal stress may be measured and controlled with much greater reliability.

Applicants note that Foster specifically discloses that transverse stress remains in the web. At column 3, lines 61-68, Foster discloses that variations in longitudinal tension (i.e. transverse stresses) may be present across the width of the sheet, even to the point that a lateral shift of the entire sheet may occur. Foster asserts that with the invention disclosed therein, these transverse stresses do not introduce artificial errors. However, this is essentially a "work-around". Foster nowhere discloses or suggests absorbing the transverse stresses, and so does not meet the requirements of claims 1, 2, and 5.

Applicants emphasize, with reference to the deficiencies of Foster as noted above, that the mere presence of rollers does not imply that they eliminate transverse stresses. Foster discloses rolls 24 and 26 for transmitting total tension, but also discloses that transverse stresses remain in the web.

With regard to Perrine, the rejection references column 4, lines 42-45. Therein, it is disclosed that the position of the tension roll 26 of Perrine is a function of the strip tension. The rejection asserts that this constitutes an ability to absorb transverse stresses in the strip. Applicants respectfully disagree.

S/N 09/666,867

PATENT

The tension roll 26 of Perrine is a simple longitudinal tensioning device. It maintains the base longitudinal tension in the strip at a more or less constant level, as disclosed for example at column 4, lines 14-34. However, Perrine does not disclose or suggest that the tension roll absorbs transverse stresses in the strip. Applicant furthermore finds no structure or means in Perrine by which transverse stresses in the strip could be absorbed, either by the tension roll 26 or by other elements.

As noted previously with regard to Foster, the mere presence of a roll, even a roll used to control tension in general, does not inherently provide the function of absorbing transverse stresses in a strip.

In addition, while claims 1, 2, and 5 of the claimed invention require tension to be measured in a portion of the strip, Perrine does not disclose or suggest such a feature. The tension roll 26 of Perrine does not measure tension. Rather, the tension roll 26 and the torsion bar 42 provide consistent tension. Applicants find no disclosure or suggestion of tension measurement.

With regard to Børresen, the rejection characterizes element 17 as providing tension measuring features similar to those of the claimed invention. However, even if this characterization is correct, which point Applicants do not concede, Børresen does not disclose or suggest controlling transverse stresses in a strip.

The roller 10 of Børresen was relied upon in the previous Office Action as a device for controlling transverse stresses. However, Applicants note that such a function is neither disclosed nor suggested by Børresen. In addition, Applicants note that Børresen discloses, for example at column 2, lines 61-65, that reducing the friction at roller 10 is advantageous. It is also stated therein that the roller 10 need not be rotatable. Presumably, therefore, the roller 10 has a low-friction surface. In other words, it has a relatively low grip. Thus, the roller 10 of Børresen does not even correspond to the structure of the exemplary embodiment disclosed for

S/N 09/666,867

PATENT

the claimed invention, wherein the rollers are described to function in part by virtue of a good grip between those rollers and the strip (page 4, line 33+).

With regard to Berger, the rejection characterizes elements 23 and 26 as partitioning devices, functioning in the manner recited in the pending claims. Applicants respectfully disagree.

Applicants find no disclosure or suggestion that elements 23 and 26 of Berger are partitioning devices, or that they function as the partitioning device of the claimed invention. That is, there is no disclosure or suggestion that elements 23 and 26 of Berger absorb transverse stresses.

As noted previously, even if elements 23 and 26 of Berger are similar in general structure to elements of the claimed invention, which point Applicants do not concede, this does not imply similar functionality absent some positive disclosure thereof.

In summary, none of the cited references disclose or even suggest a partitioning device that absorbs transverse stresses. Several of the references suffer from additional deficiencies as well, as described above.

As the claimed invention according to claims 1, 2, and 5 comprises elements and functions neither disclosed nor suggested in any of Foster, Perrine, Børresen, or Bergen. Applicants respectfully submit that claims 1, 2, and 5 are not anticipated by Foster, Perrine, Børresen, or Bergen. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

Claims 3 and 4 depend from claim 2, and incorporate the limitations thereof. The above arguments apply equally to claims 3 and 4, and Applicants respectfully submit that these dependent claims need not be argued separately. Applicants do not concede the correctness of the rejection, and reserve the right to present further arguments.

S/N 09/666,867

PATENT

As all issues raised in the Office Action are now addressed, Applicants believe that all pending claims are in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration in the form of a Notice of Allowance is respectfully requested.

If a telephone conference would be helpful in resolving any issues concerning this communication, please contact Applicant's primary attorney-of-record, John J. Gresens (Reg. No 33,112) at (612) 371-5265.

Respectfully submitted,

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